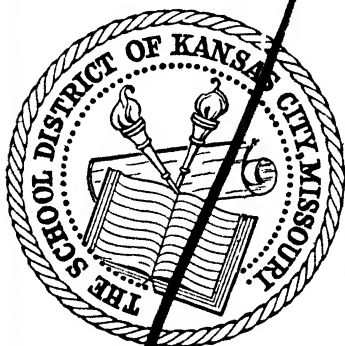


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WAITING WOMEN

WAITING WOMEN

By

CARRIE M. WHARTON

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PRELUDE

The restless sea—the cruel sea,
The menace of the cruel sea,
Which beats and breaks against the rocks
With sullen roar.
Relentlessly with sullen roar
It churns its waters into foam.
The restless sea—the cruel sea,
It lashes at the ships that ride
Upon its waves. It ebbs and flows
With ceaseless rhythm—and scoffs at winds
With sullen roar.

O, lofty cliffs that guard our rocky shore,
Our own "White Cliffs" of might, how we love you.
Staunch sentinels, that fill our hearts with hope,
Your very ruggedness imbues our souls
With strength like that of those long years
Ago, who built, from a vast wilderness,
A land whose greatness would some day sustain
A toppling world and hold the torch of faith;
Our land, we now are fighting valiantly
To keep as our forefathers wisely planned
It should be — a nation founded on the love
Of God and the equality of all mankind.

WAITING WOMEN

I

Upon a bleak and rough New England coast,
Where the Atlantic beats against the rocks
With ceaseless and relentless roar,
Our ancestors sought refuge from a land
Whose tax was heavy, and which would not grant
Permission when they chose to worship God
As they desired. Through days of want they toiled
To build their homes to house their families;
To break and cultivate the acres found
In fertile valleys hid among the hills.
From out their seed there sprang a class of men
Who builded ships and sailed the seven seas
While in their homes the women watched and prayed.

So, some two hundred years ago was built
Upon a bleak and rough New England coast,
A thrifty, seaport town called Portland, Maine.
Which is today a most important place
For our United States and its great Fleet.
Its well protected harbor is a dock
For ships that fight and those which ply the lanes
Of many seas to carry needed trades
To warring lands and suffering humanity.

In many foreign lands and seas, a war
Of devastating power was being waged.
The sorrows of a bleeding, dying world
Lay heavy on the hearts of those who lived
In peace and liberty. They longed to help
And yet protect their own beloved land.

Our country talked and worried on its course
For many great, grave issues were at stake.
Debates were held on foreign policies,
The talk was bitter, serious, the out-
Come shrouded in the blackest doubt,
While closer to our shores there crept the dark
And menacing cloud bearing the end of peace.
November Forty-one we heard the first
Faint rumored whisperings and hints there was
A possibility of war for us.
But in the town of Portland by the sea
There long had been no talk of "possibility"
Of war. To its inhabitants war meant
The widows of the men who went to sea
Upon the Kearny and the Ruben James.
Their friends and neighbors living close next door,
Or just across the elm lined shady street.
They heard the talk of officers who spoke
In quiet, guarded tones of submarines
They sunk patrolling off the Iceland coast.
They sensed the meaning of mysterious
And silent comings—goings of the great,
Grey battleships in darkness of the night.
Ah, well they knew war had already come
To Portland by the sea. The quaint old town
The poet Longfellow had known and loved.
The old First Church and Derring's Oaks;
The Eastern Cemetery where the old
Sea captains sleep, one an American
The other one an Englishman by birth.

The shady, elm lined streets that breathe of peace,
The faithful, old, watch tower high on a hill,
All these and many more historic spots
Enshrined most deeply in each loyal heart.

To cottages which line the shaded streets,
To pillared mansions gracing avenues,
Across whose roof tops one can plainly see
The lights of Navy warships in the bay
The grim reality of war had come.
The while these happenings were going on,
The heads of our affairs in Washington
Decreed, that on this rugged coast of Maine
One of our greatest bases should be built
To satisfy the needs of ocean fleets,
And make a shipping point through winter months
When farther northern ports were locked in ice.

The people of this staid New England town,
Who closely watch their rough and stormy sea;
In their own quiet way had sensed and seen
The grave, fierce struggle which the Navy waged
On alien raiders and dread submarines
Which lurked too closely to their rocky coast.
So it was with no great feeling of surprise
They learned, what was at first suspicionings
Had been at last confirmed with barest facts;
Two mighty Navies waged a war on submarines.

This city by the sea at once became
A place whose air breathed of expectancy.
A place of waiting women—sailors' wives.
They came from Norfolk—and old Boston town,
From Newport—other towns along the coast
That they might closer live to those they loved,
And greet them when their ships came home from the sea.

II

The fate of a sailor's wife must be
Many long hours of anxiety,
 Waiting for ships that are sailing on
Tossing, wild waves of a treacherous sea.

She knows when at night the great bells toll,
Some where a ship in distress on a shoal
 Flounders and waits through a storm, that is
Watching and waiting to claim someone's soul.

The heart of a sailor's wife is strong,
Never admitting through days that are long
 Fears she may feel for one, who has
Answered the call of a siren's wild song.

The fate of a sailor's wife must be
Many long hours of anxiety.
 But she is brave as the ones, who are
Manning the ships on a treacherous sea.

III

A friend is a hand that guides our steps
 Along the pathways which are dark.
A friend is a voice whose singing tones
 Are echoes of a joyous lark.

From places near or those remote,
 Fate gathers thread to interblend
The kindred needs of lonely hearts,
 And weaves a pattern labeled—friend.

IV

Three women watched.

The sea was rough,
Its voice was gruff
 As angry men's
 In answer to
 Their mute appeal.

Three women watched.

The sea was calm,
A healing balm.
 The song it sang
 Could lull to rest
 Each troubled heart.

Three women watched.

The sea was stark,
Its waters dark.
 "There are no ships,"
 The old one said
 And turned away.

V

The youngest, Mary,
 had bright eyes,
the color of
 summer skies,
or lovely
gentains blooming.

Her home was in warm,
 distant lands,
New Mexico
 where the sands
are always
warm and glowing.

She had but come from
 Newport bay,
where she had gone
 just last May
to see her
Aunt Rebecca.

It was while there, she
 chanced to meet
an officer
 of the Fleet,
whom she quite
shortly married.

It happened one warm
afternoon,
the fog had cleared
none too soon
for Mary's
wistful wishing.

While walking slowly
through a park,
she felt the winds,
heard a lark,
and thought of
glowing deserts.

And then she saw him
standing there;
A handsome lad,
jaunty air
and dark eyes
gaily smiling.

"I beg your pardon,
do you know
where I can find
Lane, I—O?
I have been
vainly searching."

Fair Mary answered
with a smile,
"It is behind
you a mile.
It is the
homestead of my

Great-aunt Rebecca.
I will go
to lead the way,
and I know
my Aunt will
like your coming."

"I came to answer
her request
that I might meet
her young guest,
who lives at
some great distance."

Then Mary laughing
made reply,
"You are the victim
of a whim,
she has been
slyly planning.

It happens I am
the young guest
you came to see
at her request."
He said, "How
very charming."

When hearts are youthful,
life is gay
and love will find
some sweet way
to start its
song to singing.

VI

The artist Love is a most skillful master,
 He looks at life through happy lover's eyes,
And paints the flame of radiant candleglow
 On smoky curtains of the rain drenched skies.

He walks with them along a shadowed pathway
 And makes of it the dust of filtered gold;
He plays the captivating melodies
 When lover's tell the sweetest story told.

His laughter finds a way of deftly drowning
 The murmurs of a sad and lurking sigh;
He blots from pages of remembering
 The words which spell the meaning of good-bye.

VII

For Mary and the one her heart had claimed
The hours of every passing day and night
Were filled with joy. They sat on foamy sands
And talked, or climbed a rocky, wind-swept height.

They visited the old and hallowed spots
Most dear to hearts of the old seaport town;
They strolled along the dingy waterfront
Where cottages were grey and tumble-down.

One day while walking through a narrow street,
They spied a small inviting antique shop
Its windows lined with brightly colored glass.
They paused awhile, then thinking they would stop

A moment for a little closer look
They opened wide the weather-beaten door.
They heard the tinkling of soft, ringing tones
That ran and danced across the polished floor.

Then from a room beyond the little shop
A woman came, who smiling, welcomed them.
She was quite old, the years had placed upon
Her head a lovely pearled diadem.

Her voice was low, and when she spoke they caught
The accents of another mother tongue,
The relic of a land that must have known
Her place of birth and years when she was young

"You wish to see my wares?" she asked of them,
And Mary answered with a friendly smile,
"We may not care to buy, but if you do
Not mind we wish to look around awhile."

"My heart is always happy when I show
My pretty things to those who understand
Their worth. This little mantle clock which runs
In perfect time my father carved by hand.

Those figurines and that glass water set
Are what Grandmother gave to John and me
The day we wed." So through the afternoon
They talked, or listened to the history

Of things she cherished in her heart and mind.
They spoke of love and homes, and native lands.
Of what they hoped to do. They gave no thought
To time as measured by the fragile hands,

Carressing the face of the old mantle clock.
She told them of the land where she was born,
Which lies today beneath the ashes of
A great and cultural past, war-torn

And bleeding, dominated by the will
Of one who places himself before God.
Who breeds a race to hate, one educated but
For death, whose torch is but a flaming rod.

"The country I once knew has bled to death."
She spoke as one with longing to forget,
What once were messengers of joy the hand
Of Fate had turned to gall-wood of regret.

"We had been married but a year when John,
Who always had a great desire to roam,
Decided we should seek a newer land
Of opportunities to build our home.

We loved the land he chose, America,
Its might, its peoples, and its liberty.
We settled in this town close by the bay,
John being one whose work was on the sea.

Here we have lived and raised our family,
Four sons who followed in their father's trade
Excepting one, the youngest, he wanted wings.
Today they fight——loyal and unafraid

The battles of our great United States.
Since John has gone, he died ten years ago,
I have maintained this little shop.
The war has made my business very slow

But I am quite content. Just yesterday I
Received a letter from my sister who
Had smuggled it across the border to
Be mailed by an old trusted man she knew.

She wrote of cruelties her people bore,
Of hardships, bloodshed and despair;
Of things that were, but never more can be.
Her letter ended with a little prayer,

Which I would like for you to read.
It speaks so well of painful forfeitings
Of life and hopes." She handed them a paper from
Among a little box of treasured things.

"Dear God, I can but think a prayer,
I dare not voice my secret hopes
For fear of death or worse.
It was through no desire of mine
That those in other lands should feel
The powers that can coerce.

The passing years have been so few
Since I gave up my husband for
A cause so like this one.
Then hard times came. I tried to not
Complain, I had our little farm
And three young, stalwart sons.

We worked and saved. I had fond dreams.
Of noble deeds they would perform
For men who lived in peace.
On Flander's fields and Dunkurque's shore
A book, a song were lost one dawn.
God grant this war may cease.

Somewhere tonight past England's coast
A giant plane with wings of death

My lad is forced to fly.

He wants not to destroy or kill,

A builder he had hoped to be—

I pray he may not die."

VIII

What price the ravages of war and hate,
Whose cruel, grasping hands are lapping flames
Of prairie fire fanned by the winds of lust.
Both weak and soulless is a man who rules
A race by might and fear. Who lays to waste
Futurities beneath a blood-red dust.
The battles fought and for the moment won
Can never know a lasting victory
Whose standard was a piercing, flaming rod.
How many kingdoms through the flight of time
Have crumbled and for ages been forgot
Because their leaders had deserted God.

IX

One never comprehends
 The rapid flight of time
 When spent conversing with
Some new, or older friends.

A mist of feather-spray
 Had blown in from the sea.
 A slender maiden moon
Was drinking from the bay,

When Mary and the one
 She loved had left the shop,
 Whose low-hung eaves protect
The nesting halcyon.

The mist clouds were a screen
 That hid them from the night,
 While close against their breast
Each held a figurine.

X

The weeks too swiftly
 passed away,
until there came
 one June day,
an urgent
call to duty.

So they were married
 one bright dawn.
Another week of
 joy soon gone,
then Larry
sailed one morning.

Now Mary watches
 by the sea.
The bonds of friendship
 holding three
who waiting
watch together.

XI

Quite different from Mary
Was Susan, whom she met the day,
She journeyed up from Newport way
To make her home at Portland's bay.

For Susan was quite joyous,
Her laughing chatter all the while
Had helped to make each weary mile
Seem short. One liked her ready smile.

Susan. "Is not this beastly weather?
I always dread this month, it seems
Each element in some way schemes
To beat the other in extremes."

"I do not like it either,
Where I lived out on the plain
We did not have such fog and rain.
At times I scarcely can refrain,

From feeling sad," said Mary.
"Here everything is all quite new
And strange to me. I never knew
There was a wind so chill that blew."

"I take it you are going
To Portland, Maine. A sailor's wife?
A very fascinating life.
My name is Susan, Susan Rife.

Do you have friends or relatives
Where you can go? If not, I live
At "Patient Molly's." She will give
You a room, I am quite positive.

She is the dearest lady.
Old, almost eighty years, but sweet,
A woman you will want to meet.
Her house is spacious, bright and neat "

Mary: "I have no family closer
Than an old Aunt down Newport way.
I will, indeed, be glad to stay
With you while living by the bay."

XII

It was dawn,
and a mist
had rolled in
from the bay.

It was dawn,
and the town
wore a robe
of dull grey.

It was dawn,
with the winds
blowing chill
from the bay.

XIII

"A nice reception I must say,"
laughed Susan with a shrug.

"Of all the things that sea can do
Why must it throw off fog today,

When I had hoped for you the thrill
of seeing Molly's house
for the first time, the way it looks
when sunshine silhouettes it on the hill."

XIV

There is something about an old house
On the brow of a hill, as it stands
So aloof and secure with its years
That have aged it with kindly, old hands.

That awakens forgotten young dreams
And can tug at responsive heart strings,
To erase for a while with their charms
All the sorrows which worldliness brings.

There is something about an old house
Whose great chimney is smoked by the fires
Which have burned on its hearth, and have seen
The fulfillment of hopes and desires.

Whose great walls have resounded with song,
And have witnessed the giving of life.
Who have seen much of loving and joy,
Much of sorrow and pain—but no strife.

There is something about an old house
As it faces a bay from a hill;
That is fine, that is calm and remote
As the sea when quiescent and still.

Such a house was the one on the crown
Of a hill, high above the dark sea.
The old house of sweet Molly O'Day
Who was born in the County-of-Down.

XV.

At the grinding sound of slowly turning wheels
On the drive, where arching treetops seek to hide
Secrets from the eyes of the too curious,
The old massive door quickly opened wide
And through the mist a call of welcome reached the girls

"Susan dear, I am so happy you have come,
The old house and I have long been wanting you;
And this is Mary — I am glad to have you, child,
Susan tells me Navy routine is quite new
To your mode of living, you will like it
I am sure. Come now with me and we will have
Something hot to drink before you see your rooms."

Molly led them down the hall, past many doors
To the kitchen, where the air was filled with fumes
Of strong coffee and of pungent cleanliness.

"I have saved your old room for you, Susan,
And for Mary the one next to you,
The blue one with the window that faces the sea."

By this time the grey mist had all vanished,
And the sunbeams were painting the floors
With faint, filigree patterns of gay fluer-de-lis.

"What a beautiful place you have chosen
For a home, while you wait for your Joe;
As for Molly — she is a beloved, old soul."

"She is everything that is noble,
And her friends have her very well named;
She has won the respect of the town as a whole."

XVI

"The patient lady of dreams."

Her friends call Molly O'Day
With Irish glint in her eyes
And manner charming and gay.

And well they remember when
In eighteen-eighty and six,
The roving Dennis O'Day,
A lad most smooth with his tricks,

Brought home a lovely young bride
From far off County-of-Down,
And built the house on the hill
With thoughts to work in the town.

But Dennis born of the sea,
Soon longed for tangy, salt air,
The feel of spray on his hands
And singing winds in his hair.

He wanted ships of his own
To sail in and out of the bay.
So bought a sturdy, whale boat
And named it Molly O'Day.

He cleaned and manned it with pride;
One morning, April the fourth,
He raised the anchor at dawn
And sailed away to the north.

Sweet Molly never has heard
 A thing of him since the day
He kissed her leaving her in
 The house which faces the bay.

She waits, and watches, and hopes,
 And places every night
A lantern high on the porch,
 Which sends a beckoning light

Along the path on the hill
 To where it touches the bay.
To guide if he should return,
 The steps of Dennis O'Day.

XVII

The weeks and months passed slowly by, and loud
Yet louder grew the rumblings from across
The sea, more urgent were the pleas for help.
With helpless nations falling crushed and lost
The foe was marching on to victory.

A foe who bound mankind with slavery's chains
And laid to smouldering ash with one swift blow
What man for centuries had worked to build.
And closer to our own beloved shores
With menacing and peace destroying roar
The great, black cloud of war rolled swiftly on,
To cast its dreaded shadow on a land
That had known the love and joys of liberty
For some two hundred years or more.

And then it came—with swiftness of the darts
A swooping streak of fury dealing death,
And blasting hopes of our neutrality.
December seventh, nineteen-forty-one,
A date indelibly stamped upon
Our hearts and minds with the warm blood of our
Own countrymen — a day to live until
The flight of time and elements are stilled.

A peaceful island slept, the magic of
A tropical night sang sweet alohas;
The waters lapped the warmth from foamy sands
Unknowing that at dawn they would be stained
With human blood, and hold upon their breast
The wreckage of a nations' might, destroyed
By enemies who stabbed it in the back
While their sly emissaries talked for peace.

With lightning swiftness of that great, grey bird,
Whose wide-spread wings and talons speak of strength
The emblem of a great and mighty land
America, the country of the free,
Our nation showed its wrath and sought revenge.
The call to arms was sounded, clear and loud,
From every walk of life they came
An army of strong, marching men
With willingness and eagerness to aid.
A country stood united by the bonds
Of brotherhood, a burning, mad desire
To hold the freedom our forefathers won
Through years of bitter sacrifice and toil;
To lift again the standard they once bore,
That stands for rights of man through love of God,
And carry it to lasting victory.

While larger grew the force of fighting men,
Still faster, faster turned the giant wheels
Of industries to meet our nation's needs
And those of other lands across the seas,
Whose valiant men fought nobly by our side
United through the bonds of a just cause,
Determined to defeat a common foe.
And larger grew the army that must watch
And hope and pray, the waiting women who
Defend their land with bravery of their hearts.

Along the bleak and rough New England coast;
Where the Pacific washes the warm sands;
In the tall-timbered north and sunny south
And on the vast expanse of open plains,
This loyal army works and carries on.

XVIII

The waiting wives,
The watching wives,
 The old and young
And loving wives.

They watch the sea,
They live the sea,
 They breathe, and love,
And hate the sea.

XIX

The Spring had come, the apple trees in bloom
Were drifts of scented snow on rough hillsides;
The air at dawn was perfumed by a spray
That drank the freshness of the lilac buds.

The afternoon was pleasant, one of those
Unusual days the poets like to write
About. The breeze was gentle from the sea
Whose mood was one of rare, quiescent calm.
The sun, which earlier that day had shone
Through morning mists, and warmed the fresh, cool air

The recreation room at Civic Hall
Was filled with women, wives of Navy men,
Who meet each week to work and make new friends
And talk of subjects closest to their hearts.
"The Waiting Women Club" they call themselves,
Originated and designed to help
Relieve monotony of loneliness
They talk of books, the best and newest shows;
Their voices hum while needles flash and click.
In whispered tones someone repeats a bit
Of idle gossip heard of battles fought
Quite close to Portland's bay, or, of
Mysterious crafts some fisherman had seen
One dawn while fishing off the rocky coast.

Perhaps it is but idle gossip, yet
It fills each woman's heart with anxious fear.

"A very pleasant meeting I would say"
Remarked old Molly as the three walked up
The hill. They did not hurry for the girls
Had slowed their steps in deference to her age.

"It was, indeed," said Susan, "And did you see
The quiet pleasing way that Mrs. Drew
The Captain's wife was greeting each new guest.
She is the grandest woman and I heard
Her husband had been ordered to command
A Fleet in some quite distant port.
She never does complain but tries somehow
To make the lives of others happier."

"Did either of you notice that young girl,
The one who held that cherub of a boy?
Her husband has but joined the navy, and
Is stationed on the newest of its boats.
She told me she had heard it whispered that
The Fleet accompanied by a group of smaller craft,
Might stop at Portland's harbor on its way
To duty in some unknown foreign port."

The three walked on in silence for awhile
Each one engrossed with her own secret thoughts
And hopes which had become a wild desire.

Then Mary spoke. "The evening promises
To be a lovely one, let us all go
To old Observatory tower
And watch the moon come up across the bay."

XX

For some two hundred years and more,
The old Observatory tower
Has stood, a faithful sentinel
Above the rough New England shore.

Today, as in the years long gone
It is a watching place for those
Who wait for ships that come at night,
Or with the mists of early dawn.

The path is narrow, rough and steep,
It bears the prints of countless feet;
Today's—obliterated ones
Of those forgotten dead, who sleep

In the old Churchyard's hallowed spot.
Those pioneers who helped to build
A nation. Through the march of time
Their deeds will live—with names forgot.

As in the past, so, for today
Observatory see and guards
The secret hopes and fears of those
Who watch for ships across the bay.

XXI

April, May, and then the month of June.
Rapidly the shadows passed the hand
Of the sundial, and sunbeams warmed the waters
In the sheltered coves, and spongy sand.

Many were the pleasant hours the girls
Spent in rolling through the shady streets,
Or in roaming in the densely, timbered woodlands
Searching for the flowers cool retreats.

Often when the days were misty grey,
They would make long visits at the zoo;
The museum filled with rarest masterpieces.
And library with choice books they knew.

They would often seek the waterfront.
Where the shacks and people told strange tales
Of the past. Or they would sit through idle moments
Watching boats with white or crimson sails.

It was there they met small, limpy Pete,
Who told them where the fishing was the best;
When the winds were still, in clouds the sunset painted
He would trace them pictures in the west.

They forgot the flight of time was slow,
Learning joys are found with bitter-sweet;
Finding much of life's sublimity in cheery
Words of wisdom from the lips of Pete

XXII

Small, limpy Pete was one of the many young
Evacuees, who left a shattered home
In search of refuge in a safer land.

The ship on which he sailed from England's shore,
Was a valiant one, her Captain an old,
Seafaring man with steady mind and hand

Of all the many little folk who played
About the deck, it was small Pete with slow
And halting steps who won the Captain's heart.

"And where will you be going when we reach
The great United States?" the Captain asked.
He caught a look of fear that seemed to dart

Through Pete's blue eyes. "O, sir, I do not know,
You see, I have no relatives in your great land,
For all of mine were killed in Coventry."

"Ahem," the Captain said and loudly blew
His nose "Tomorrow when we dock at my
Home town. you stick quite close by me

I know, Pete, you will love our rocky cliffs,
They will remind you of your own "White Cliffs
Of Dover" looking always at the sea "

"O, sir, I wish that I might live with you,
I am quite certain I could work enough
To earn my keep. I would try not to be

A nuisance." "Run along," the Captain said,
"For I have work to do." At dawn the ship
Was docked, the decks were cleared.

The last to leave the boat, and walking hand
In hand, where Captain Pat and limpy Pete,
Who waved and smiled when friends and neighbors
cheered.

Far down the walk along the waterfront,
Past dingy shacks, toward the tree lined streets,
Where small, white cottages reposed in neat,

Green lawns they walked, to stop before the gate
Of one. "Ho, Sally mine, we have come home,"
The Captain called, and slyly winked his eye at Pete.

The door was quickly opened — with one look
Into a pair of frightened, tearful eyes
Strong arms held Pete and he forgot the past.

"Well son," the Captain laughed and cleared his throat,
We'd better carry in those bags, it looks
To me that you have found a home at last."

XXIII

It was a warm Sabbath day
Quite the same as usual.
Clear and loud the tones of bells
From the spire of every church,
Echoed far across the bay.

Quietly from all around,
Worshippers had met to pray
Seeking hope and strength from God.
In the peaceful afternoon
Came an old, familiar sound,

Whistles blowing in the bay.
Some one called, "The Fleet is in,"
Suddenly from every street
Came a laughing, shouting throng
Running swiftly to the bay.

On the bleak and rough hillside,
On the broad, smooth promenade
Bordering along the sea,
An excited, vast throng watched.
Hearts were filled with hope and pride.

Standing silently apart
From the noisy groups, beneath
An old and designated tree
Where they had planned loved ones to meet,
Eagerly with anxious heart.

XXIV

Three women watched
That Sabbath day
Across the bay,
 The great warships
 And smaller boats
 Far out at sea.

Three women watched.
The boats were docked,
The gates unlocked,
 Then from the pier
 A shouting mob
 Rushed to the shore

Three women watched
Then there were two
Saw those they knew
 And loved so well,
 With eagerness
 Run to the tree

Three women watched.
With joyous cries
And happy eyes,
 Two girls were clasped
 In loving arms
 Glad—though alone

One woman watched.

XXV

Three days to spend with folks at home,
Just seventy and two fleet hours
To crowd with joys of love and life.
The promenades along the sea;
Secluded paths on wooded hills
Were trysting places for the young,
Whose hearts were filled with ecstasies
Of love's sweet song, so old, yet ever new.
The streets were gay with happy throngs,
And from the windows of each home
Showed glowing lights until the dawn,
Where friends and relatives had come
To meet a loved one home from sea.

XXVI

"Our last night," words which though left unspoken,
In each heart were ringing loud and clear.
Lips must wear a smile, and eyes must never
Show a tear — they must reflect good cheer.

Portland's busy streets were filled with pleasant
Sounds of those, who captured from the night
Endless joy, which would in some dark moment
Be for them a guiding satellite.

On the hill, the house of "Patient Molly"
Wore an air of gay festivity,
From the bottom to the top were glowing
Lights, reflected in the weary sea.

In the hall and the great, spacious living
Room, a motley crowd was dancing to
Lively melodies. There were old comrades,
Friends of many years and some quite new.

There were gracious ladies dressed in satin,
Some in lace, and some in gingham gown.
There were admirals, and staunch, old captains,
Youthful sailors, men of great renown.

From his place above the smoky mantle,
Pictured Dennis smiled and seemed to say,
"Be ye merry, fill the halls with laughter,
It was meant that life should be that way."

From a cushioned seat in the bow window
Molly watched, with happy, little Pete,
Those, whose smiles were bravely drowning truant
Fears, while gliding to a rhythmic beat.

"Is not Captain Pat and mother Sally
Just the grandest folks you ever met?
And are they not a very striking couple
As they dance the graceful minuet?"

"Faith, and that they are, my little laddie,
You are certainly a lucky boy
To have found a home with such fine people."
"That I am, I hope I bring them joy."

"Molly, where is Susan, also Mary?
They have neither danced for quite a while."
Molly leaning close against his shoulder
Pointed through the window with a smile.

"Follow that old trail up to the hilltop,
See that pair of silhouettes which stand
Facing the sea. That is Susan, Mary,
And their husbands — waiting hand in hand,"

The winds were playing dulcet symphonies,
They seemed endeavoring to hush the sea's
Wild cry. The moon had laid a path of gold
On tossing waters racing uncontrolled.

From far within the cloistered, wooded hill
Where shadows slept, a lonely whip-poor-will
Called to his mate. The stars were fairy-like;
The milky way was a great, foamy dyke

That spanned the sky. The faithful tower looked down
Across the hill toward the thrifty town.
It knew the hour had come for the farewell,
But what it saw or heard — it would not tell.

"These days have been so filled with joy, I know
They will stay with me everywhere I go;
Their memories will be a guilding light,
To cheer each day and radiate each night.

I do not know exactly when we sail,
But promise me, my sweetheart, without fail
You will be standing here, our favored place,
With a sweet smile for me on your dear face."

"I promise, Larry, after you are gone
To wait your sailing hour before the dawn,
I will be waiting with you through each hour,
Beneath the light of old, Observatory tower."

XXVII

The sun was brightly shining
 On waters in the empty bay,
The boats one saw next morning
 Far out at sea, were those with gay,
 Red sails that glisten in the light;
The great, warships had vanished
 In shelter of the friendly night.

The streets were stilled and empty,
 They missed the happy, shouting throngs;
But in plant and workshop
 Were heard the rousing, fighting songs
 Of those who worked most willingly
To help our fighting men and those
 In lands across the sea.

XXVIII

The warmth of summer months, too soon, was gone,
The autumn winds that swept the ice chilled sea
Were raw and cold.

The trees that covered steep and rocky hills
And lined the streets and evenues.
Were brown and gold.

The people in this thrifty seaport town
Discussed the battles lost and won, but in
Their quiet way
Each one concealed his secret fears. They talked
Of winter's hardships, and their needs when days
And nights were grey.

Of evenings gathered round a crackling fire
The children roasted chestnuts, or would pop
Great bowls of corn.
The women knitted sweaters for the boys
Who fought our war; the men would smoke and turn
The pages worn

And finger printed of some newest book.
Quite often they would speak in wishful tones
Of coming Spring.
The crops their farmer friends were making plans
To raise next year: they told of hopes they held
The months would bring

The last of war to their own land, and those
Who suffered in the countries crushed beneath
The heel of hate.

The fund the children of the schools had raised
To build a fitting monument, that would
Commemorate

The lives of fighting men lost in this war.
One evening "Patient Molly" listened to
Such talk, then spoke
"What if the winter months are long and hard,
There will be warmer days to come, and there
Is always hope.

It matters not how long the hills lie white,
How dark our darkest hour, the sunshine will
Dispel the gloom.

Can we forget in such a little while,
God's promise of eternal life and joy
When apple blossoms bloom?

If the new year cannot fulfill our hopes,
We will fight on to lasting victory,
The kind that brings
The peace of God to earth, we will keep faith,
And watch for apple trees to send forth bloom
In other Springs."

XXIX

The apple trees will bloom in Spring,
To shelter birds that sweetly sing
And hide their nests on leafy boughs.

The fields which torn and barren lie
Will some day hear a sowers cry
And turn their scars beneath his plows.

They will forget men fought and died,
And with their bloom and harvest hide
What war so ruthlessly has torn,

For life and time move ever on.
This cloud will pass, for at some dawn
God's peace is waiting to be born.

XXX

Then nations will forget the battle cry,
All men will live in common brotherhood.
The farmer who today must bear a gun,
Will grasp once more the handle of a plow,
And smell the poignancy of new-cut earth
That knows not stench of blood—but rain and sun.

To all the walks of life from whence they came,
They will return. Those bravely fighting men
Who have this day been forced by war to yield,
Their hopes and dreams to heed their country's call
To fight its cause and hold its banner high,
To strive for freedom on some battlefield.

The giant wheels of industry will cease
To turn machines and instruments of death.
There will be none of waiting on the shore
For ships that fight our battles on the seas.
The song of larks will flood the air that now
Is rent with cannons thundering roar.

God grant the coming of that dawn, and soon,
When wars shall end. And when the plans are drawn
To shape anew the worlds futurity,
May this great land of ours from sea to sea,
From mountains—fields—and plains stand as it has
Through ages past—America the free.

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